

Senior Minister's Report to the Board, November 2015

Much of my time has been occupied with preparing for my installation as your senior minister which will be November 22nd at 4 pm. Thanks to Kristen Leddy and her amazing team of installers, I should be plugged in and fully operational by that date. This team has been responsible for creating and sending out hundreds of invitations and tracking the responses. They have worked with me to create the order of service (ably assisted by Lynda Bluestein) and the finished product will be quite beautiful and a real keepsake. The final walkthroughs for the procession and ceremony will happen this week. The food is being prepared, decorations are being made, choirs are rehearsing and we are all very excited. Greetings will be delivered from the UUA, the Greater Bridgeport Council of Churches and our own First Selectman in Westport. Over two dozen ministers will process. I am so thankful for all the love and hard work that went into this service.

Worship attendance continues to grow. David Vida reports that he is spending more and more of his time welcoming newcomers. While we have enough new members to warrant another membership signing ceremony, David and I decided to wait until after the holidays before scheduling our next one. I am thankful for Ed Thompson and his fabulous musicians for working with our worship associate team in such a synergistic way. Every service feels just right.

Our work with policies and procedures continues apace. I had hoped to have the financial and building and ground policies wrapped up by now but there is still important work to do. It may be after the New Year before our building and grounds policy is completed. As you all know, Deborah Quinn has resigned as our Stewardship Chair. I ask the board to work with NLDC to select a replacement. There is critical work to be done in our stewardship program overall, including a year-end appeal to non –members and preparing for the 2016 pledge drive. I and the staff stand ready to work with the new chair when selected.

The staff is happy to review our membership rolls and keep them current. I have instituted some procedures for doing this on an orderly basis. We have decided to do a review three times a year; late January (in preparation for the annual reporting to the UUA), early May (in preparation for the Annual Meeting of the Church in June) and late September. Those congregants who are not current in their activity or pledging will be moved to “attende” status and returned to membership status if and when they resume attending and pledging. We feel there is no need to send a letter asking of their intent. I have asked David to review those most elderly and longtime members and assign them “honorary” status for life. There will no longer be a hardship category.

While we have a great deal of work to do as we continue to evolve into a large program church, our spirit is strong and hopeful.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Dr. John T. Morehouse